

Hawaii MARINE

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Lava Dogs honored for heroism

Four 1/3 Marines receive Bronze Star Medals

Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Combat Correspondent

Four Marines from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, were presented Bronze Stars with the "V" device (authorized for acts or service involving direct participation in combat operations) for their heroic actions during the battle for Fallujah in a ceremony, Monday, aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay.

The Marines — Capt. Jer Garcia, from Honolulu; Staff Sgt. Ralph Scott, from Tallahassee, Fla.; Sgt. Michael Chambers, from Lexington, S.C., and Cpl. Alexis Ayala, from Jamaica, Queens, N.Y., by way of Morganton, N.C. — were present-

ed their medals in front of family, friends, and about 1,000 fellow Lava Dogs by 1/3 commanding officer, Lt. Col. James Bierman, and 1/3 sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. Michael Berg.

"You hear the award citations presented today, and you stand a little taller," commented Bierman after the ceremony. "It is a true honor to serve with men of this caliber."

According to the awardees, the true honor came not from the medals themselves or even from their individual actions, but rather from the privilege of serving on the battlefield with their fellow Lava Dogs.

"Some might say it's a big moment when you receive a Bronze Star, and it is a great honor, but I consider it an honor for my company and for the Marines I served with, not necessarily for myself personally," said Garcia, who currently serves as 1/3's assistant operations officer, but who previously was the company commander for Bravo Company, 1/3, in

Iraq.

"I feel good for Bravo Company right now. This medal may be on my chest — but the men that fought and bled and died — it's their award, not mine."

Scott, Chambers and Ayala all spoke of their medals in a similar vein.

"It felt good to receive the award, because I knew I was accepting it on behalf of all the Marines of Charlie Company, 1st Platoon," said Scott, who presently serves as 1/3's assistant operations chief, but who previously served as the platoon commander — an officer's billet — for Charlie Company, 1st Platoon, in Iraq.

"It was an honor to serve with them in combat, and it was an honor for me to stand next to the three Marines who were awarded today. All I did was my job. I was there when they asked me to be. I did what they asked me to do. I tried to bring everybody home."

See **BRONZE**, A-7



Sgt. Joe Lindsay

Four Marines from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment: (from left) Cpl. Alexis Ayala, from Jamaica, Queens, N.Y. by way of Morganton, N.C.; Sgt. Michael Chambers, from Lexington, S.C.; Staff Sgt. Ralph Scott, from Tallahassee, Fla., and Capt. Jer Garcia, from Honolulu, stand following a ceremony held Monday aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, in which the four were awarded the Bronze Star with combat "V" for their battlefield valor during Operation Iraq Freedom II.

HMH-463 heads to Desert Talon

Pfc. Edward C. deBree
Combat Correspondent

Approximately 40 Marines assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 463, left Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, for Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., Nov. 15, to take part in the desert training exercise, Desert Talon.

While at MCAS Yuma, the Marines will undergo training that will better prepare them for the desert environment during their upcoming deployment where they will serve in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"It's a different environment over in Iraq than it is here," said Capt. Brian Friestman, operations officer, HMH-463. "We practice things like landing here (in Hawaii) to prepare them, but there really isn't that desert environment here. Over in Yuma, it's the perfect place to practice landing in a desert environment."

Marine pilots will practice landing in desert environments, trying to avoid what is known as a brown out, said the 34-year-old San Antonio, Texas native. A brown out is when a helicopter lands and clouds of sand surround the aircraft, limiting visibility of the pilots. This is caused when the helicopter descends and the rotor kicks up sand that surrounds the helicopter.

The way pilots avoid brown outs is to match a certain air-speed and altitude, which blows the sand a certain way instead

See **TALON**, A-4



Pfc. Edward C. deBree

Marines from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron stack their belongings to prepare to take off to Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma, Ariz., Nov. 15. The Marines will take part in Exercise Desert Talon to prepare them for an upcoming deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Season opener



Cpl. Rich Mattingly

The cloud-like akua loa, or tangible representation of the Hawaiian god Lono, is escorted by traditional means to Kuau, better known as Pyramid Rock, aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, for the opening ceremonies of the Makahiki season. The four-month season of Makahiki has traditionally been a time for peace and recreation in the Hawaiian islands.

MAG-24 tested in mishap drill

Pfc. Edward C. deBree
Combat Correspondent

Marines assigned to Marine Aircraft Group 24 operate and train around the Hawaiian Islands on a regular basis to ensure the squadrons stand ready to deploy in support of operations and exercises as directed by III Marine Expeditionary Force. But what if a CH-53D Sea Stallion were to be involved in a mishap? Are the squadrons trained to handle these situations? Would the squadrons be able to handle the situation immediately and correctly? The answer is yes.

On Nov. 14, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 363 received a phone call informing the squadron that one of its

CH-53Ds went down in a landing zone near Wheeler Army Air Field on Oahu. The caller stated that four of the crewmembers escaped with injuries, and one was presumed dead. With the information received, the squadron raced into action. But what they didn't know was that this was all a drill — a simulation of a mishap that was organized by the MAG-24 Safety Department.

Two months ago, the Director of Safety and Standardization began planning a scenario to evaluate the mishap procedures of HMH-363 and MAG-24 headquarters.

"The purpose of this type of drill is to determine if the procedures and directives of our squadrons and headquarters are correct, if an actual accident should

happen," said Col. Michael E. Love, commanding officer, MAG-24. "This drill is the first of several drills that will occur over the next few months prior to HMH-463's deployment to Iraq. These standard procedures must be tested frequently so they can be executed properly and quickly with precise accuracy in case situations happen in combat or at home."

During the scenario, HMH-363 was tested on how well and timely they gathered intelligence, reported information to Headquarters Marine Corps, dealt with media queries, and recovered the aircraft and personnel. In the ready room, the operations duty officer, Capt. Seth F. Gibson, initiated the squadron mishap

See **DRILL**, A-5

1/3 continues sustainment training with 17-mile hump

Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Combat Correspondent



Cpl. Rich Mattingly

Marines from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, carry the American flag and Marine Corps colors while marching in formation during a 17-mile hump aboard K-Bay, Nov. 18. Marines of 1/3 are currently undergoing sustainment training in preparation for an upcoming deployment.

The Lava Dogs of 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, went on the road again for their second blistering hump in two weeks, this time trumping the 15-mile trek they completed on Nov. 4 with a 17-mile excursion, Friday, around Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay.

The latest hump was further and faster than the first and was geared to push the Marines to the limit of their physical capabilities as they prepare to embark on their upcoming combat deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"Humping 17 miles in full combat gear at a forced pace is no joke," said

Cpl. Pete Jarzabek, a 1/3 rifleman and team leader with Alpha Company, 2nd Platoon, 2nd Squad. "I served in Afghanistan previously with 3/3 (3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment), and I can tell you that these training humps are extremely necessary to get ready for the patrols we're going to be doing in country."

"I know first hand from experience that we're going to be humping in the mountains of Afghanistan," added the New Haven, Conn. native. "From what I saw out here today, the Marines of 1/3 are ready. They are in shape and they are motivated."

The latest hump was part of 1/3's continued sustainment training package, which they have adhered to religiously since returning from their six-

week pre-deployment training evolution at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., and the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

"You can do all the training you want, but if you don't keep it fresh, then you can lose it," commented Jarzabek, as he inspected his swollen and sore feet immediately following the hump. "That goes for both the mental and physical aspects of being a Marine infantryman. The more we hurt now, the less we'll hurt later in combat."

According to Master Gunnery Sgt. Carlos Craig, 1/3 operations chief, the sustainment training the battalion has

See **HUMP**, A-7

NEWS BRIEFS

State Alert to Sound Thursday

The State Civil Defense monthly test of sirens and the Emergency Alert System will be held Thursday at 11:45 a.m. The siren test is a steady 45-second tone, used to alert the public of emergencies that pose or may pose a threat to life and property.

Liberty Bus Service Cancelled

The Marine Corps Base Hawaii's Liberty Bus service will not be available Friday and Dec. 3 due to the Special Olympics.

For more information call Peggy Hunnings at 257-2171, ext. 262.

KOCS Tour of Homes

Visit Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Friday from 6:30 to 9 p.m. and tour a select group of homes that are decorated for the holidays. This event is hosted by the Kaneohe Officers' Spouses Club.

The Tour of Homes is open to military and civilians from on and off base. Tickets for the tour are \$7 in advance or \$10 at the door.

For more information or to buy tickets, call Jessica Brigrance at 254-1352.

Volunteers Needed for USS Arizona Service

In addition to the annual Dec. 7 observance of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navy and the National Park Service will also have a separate interment ceremony for a USS Arizona crewmember.

The interment ceremony honors a USS Arizona crewmember in his final resting place aboard the Arizona Memorial and is a wonderful opportunity for our military personnel to pay their respects to the very few Arizona survivors.

Approximately 20 volunteers from each branch of service who will observe the event as a member of the audience are needed for this ceremony. This is not a military tasking but a call for volunteers to attend a special ceremony.

Personnel interested in volunteering should contact Grace Hew Len at 473-3958 or 473-2888.

Post Office Extends Hours Starting Dec. 5

The Base Post Office will have extended hours from Dec. 5 to 23 for the holiday season. Beginning Dec. 5, the Base Post Office will be open from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays.

The Base Post Office will be open Dec. 24 for parcel pickup only.

For more information, contact the Base Post Office at 257-2008.

MMEA Returns in December

The Manpower Management Enlisted Assignments Branch from U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters, Quantico, Va., will conduct briefings at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Dec. 12 at the base theater and at Camp H.M. Smith on Dec. 13.

About 25 monitors representing more than 100 military occupational specialties will be available. Appointments are on a first-come basis and will be kept to 10 to 15 minutes to allow maximum participation.

Marines should contact their unit Career Retention Specialist for additional information.

Possible Gas Lane Closures

A gas station canopy project has been underway since Nov. 7 and is slated to take six to seven months to complete, after construction begins. The canopy will be built in phases, which means that half of the gasoline pumps will be unavailable for consumer use at any given time.

For questions concerning this project, call George Kelsey, MCCS, 254-7689 or Ken Takeya, MCCS, 254-7539.

Important Phone Numbers

On-Base Emergencies	911
Military Police	257-7114
Child Protective Service	832-5300
Fraud, Waste, Abuse & EEO	257-8852

In the CG's Mailbox



HUMMER

Sir — I am an active duty gunnery sergeant currently stationed at Marine Corps Base Hawaii. I am also an avid golfer. My concern is the way tee times are reserved for the weekends at the Klipper. I talked with Cheyenne at the pro shop and she gave me the course's policy on making tee times.

Here is the policy as it was explained to me:

Active Duty (Marines) — 6 days prior starting at noon
Active Duty (Other Branches) — 4 days prior starting at noon
Retired Marines — 4 days prior starting at 1 p.m.
Retired (Other Branches) — 3 days prior starting at noon
DoD, Reservists, Others — 3 days prior starting at 1 p.m.

I was also told that there are some tee times that are standing (7:12 a.m., 7:33 a.m., 7:40 a.m., 7:44 a.m., 7:55 a.m., 8:01 a.m., 8:08 a.m.). These are reserved for generals, admirals, colonels, and sergeants major. I understand that rank does have its privileges and this is rightfully one of those privileges. I called at 7 a.m. this past Monday for a tee time on Saturday and was told the earliest available was 10 a.m. How could that be?

I have a couple of suggestions to correct the reservation system. One would be to keep to the policy and issue tee times accordingly. The second would be an automated telephone tee time reservation system. This kind of system (Compu-Tee) is used at Navy-Marine Golf Course at Pearl

The commanding general invites input from the base community via the CG's Mailbox on the following topics:

- What are we doing that we shouldn't be doing?
- What are we not doing that we should be doing?
- What are we doing that we should be doing better?

Responses should include a recommendation that will help solve the problem and must include your name and return address.

E-mail your suggestions to the commanding general at CGMAIL@mcbh.usmc.mil.

If you don't have an e-mail account, you can fax

your suggestions to 257-3290, or you can mail them to:

**Commanding General
(Attn: CG Mail)**
MCB Hawaii
Box 63002
MCB Kaneohe Bay, HI
96863-3002

Your suggestions can also be dropped off in person on base at the Adjutant's Office in Building 216.

(Editor's Note: Letters of any length may be trimmed and edited in the interest of good taste and brevity.)

Harbor and Camp Lejeune's golf courses in North Carolina and works quite well.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to express my concerns.

Respectfully submitted,
Gunnery Sgt. Terry Bollman

Dear Gunnery Sergeant Bollman:

I have been asked by the commanding general to respond to your e-mail of Oct. 19 regarding your concerns about the tee time reservation policy at the Kaneohe Klipper Golf Course. He appreciates your comments and the time that you have taken to address this important issue.

In your e-mail, you express concern with the standing tee times for senior officers and the compliance with the golf course tee time policy since you were unable to obtain a tee time before 10 a.m. for a Saturday (Oct. 22) when you called at 7 a.m. the prior Monday. You recommend that the golf course implement an automated tee time reservation system.

First, the reservation policy authorizes all military members assigned to Marine Corps Base Hawaii to reserve tee times beginning at noon six days prior to the tee time requested. This means you can make a tee time for the following Saturday beginning at noon on the prior Sunday. Weekend tee times are always in high demand. As a result, early morning tee times are almost completely reserved in a matter of one to two hours following the opening of reserva-

Base Safety

Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay

The holiday season is once again upon us, and with it, the regular reminders focusing on safety can be seen across the base and out in town.

Familiar messages such as, "Don't Drink and Drive," "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk!" and "Be a Designated Driver," and other reminders adorn streets throughout

Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, and for good reason. More people die over the holidays due to alcohol-related accidents than any other cause.

This holiday season, use the buddy system when you're out in town. Having a buddy along when you're celebrating allows you to look after each other, and, inevitably saves lives.

If you have had too much to drink, take a cab, call a friend or get a hotel room. The

benefits outweigh the costs, and you'll never be sorry when you wake up the next day.

Many warnings remind us to be safe, but "Don't Drink and Drive" signs are the most prevalent. Look at other activities that may pose a risk, such as swimming, surfing and motorcycling. It may sound strange, but do a risk analysis of your plans and identify where the hazards are. As the old saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Sincerely,
William B. Lindsey
Assistant Chief of Staff
Marine Corps Community Services

Drivers reminded to be safe

Hands on the wheel



Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson

A motorist holds her cell phone up to her ear to talk, while driving aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. This motorist is in direct violation of the base's current order that states that the use of cellular phones, while driving, is prohibited — unless a hands-free device is used. Although the use of hands-free devices are authorized aboard K-Bay, motorists are advised that when driving aboard Army installations, the use of cell phones as well as cell phones used with a hands-free device is prohibited while operating a motor vehicle on any Army post.

Weekend weather outlook

Today



Day — mostly cloudy conditions throughout day; isolated rain showers; southwesterly winds at 7 to 10 mph

Night — mostly cloudy skies throughout the night; increase in rain showers overnight and into the early morning, light and variable winds

**High — 81
Low — 75**

Saturday



Day — mostly cloudy with temporary overcast conditions; isolated scattered rain showers; southwesterly winds at 7 to 12 mph

Night — mostly cloudy skies; light and variable winds

**High — 82
Low — 75**

Sunday



Day — mostly to partly cloudy skies; easterly winds at 7 to 10 mph

Night — mostly cloudy becoming partly cloudy overnight; rain showers; light and variable winds throughout the night

**High — 82
Low — 75**

Hawaii MARINE

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Combat Correspondent	Pfc. Edward C. deBree

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Cutting through the haze

Story and Photos By
Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson
Combat Correspondent

Ten at a time, they are ushered into a small brick room. It's dark, and the only two windows are covered with a thick haze. The haze is that of o-Chlorobenzylidene Malononitrile, more commonly known as CS gas.

To the average person, the thought of being locked into a dark room, only to have it be filled with gas, seems like a pretty barbaric thing to do to a person. But to the average Marine, it's all part of routine training and qualification they must take part in every year.

"It usually fluctuates every year — the number of Marines I have going through the chamber because of deployments and such," said Sgt. Clinton C. Schwarz, Nuclear Biological Chemical instructor, Headquarters Battalion. "This year I have about 700 Marines going through."

Schwarz has been teaching NBC training to Marines for seven years and has been qualifying Marines from Headquarters Battalion for almost

two years. The chamber is usually set to train Marines who are assigned to Headquarters Battalion twice a month on average. The goal is to qualify about 80 Marines each time, said Schwarz.

At the moment, Swartz is not only qualifying Headquarters Battalion Marines, he is also currently qualifying Marine Corps Air Facility and 3rd Radio

Battalion Marines who are awaiting their NBC instructors.

During qualification, which can take up to four and one-half hours, Marines are taught NBC threats,

reactions to NBC attacks, how to take care of and use a gas mask, how to don Mission-Oriented Protective Posture gear, and learn the process for decontamination, and other facts relating to NCB warfare, said Schwarz.

"The most difficult thing, I think, for the Marines, is paying attention to all the information I have to pass to them," said the Nodine, Minn. native. "It's hard, honestly, to hold their interest some of the time, so when it comes time for practical application, they can't remember what they're supposed to do, exactly."

Once the Marines don their gas masks and MOPP gear, they are ready to go into the gas chamber. When ready, the Marines are sectioned off and enter the building in groups of 10.

Schwarz explained that the size of the chamber determines the amount of CS capsules that are burned for the qualification. For the chamber on Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, it starts out with an initial six capsules. For each new group that goes through, one more capsule is added in order to keep the strength of the gas relatively the same for each group.

"I don't really mind going through the gas chamber because it makes me trust the gear that I may have to use in a real situation one day," said Lance Cpl. Jason A. Salas, military police, Headquarters Battalion. "That's your life that you're dealing with. I honestly just think we should have to stay in there longer."

Once in the chamber, the Marines are instructed to do a various activities such as side-straddle hops and shake their heads back and forth to ensure their mask is properly secured. After performing that task, they must then break the seal on their gas mask and clear the mask before being allowed to exit.

"It's good that we have the qualification, because it keeps the Marines' minds refreshed when it comes to NBC defense," said Schwarz. "Now if these Marines ever end up in a real-life NBC situation, their instructors in the field will have a base that they can build off of."



A Marine going through gas-chamber qualification bends down and shakes his head back and forth to ensure his mask is properly secured. After performing that task, the Marine must then break the seal on his gas mask and clear it before he is allowed to exit the chamber.



Top — A Marine helps Lance Cpl. Jason A. Salas, assigned to the Provost Marshall's Office, don his gas mask after Salas applied M-291 skin decontaminant all over his face.

Above — Marines don their Mission-Oriented Protective Posture gear before entering the gas chamber. Marines are required to qualify in the chamber once a year.



Sgt. Clinton C. Schwartz (left), NBC instructor, Headquarters Battalion, makes sure a Marine knows how to properly break the seal on his gas mask during gas-chamber qualifications, Nov. 17.



A Marine, donned in full Mission-Oriented Protective Posture gear, rubs M-291 skin decontaminant on his arm during a NBC warfare training demonstration at the gas chamber aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Nov. 17.

On the skyline ... with 1/3

by Sgt. Joe Lindsay

On the Skyline is a weekly column written by Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Combat Correspondent Sgt. Joe Lindsay. Lindsay has recently returned to K-Bay with 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, from California, where they trained to prepare them for their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Marine finds family in fellow Lava Dogs, leadership skills

Like a contestant on Donald Trump's "The Apprentice," 17-year-old Florencio Bermudez sat across the kitchen table from his parents in the El Paso, Texas, home he grew up in and tried to make a power play deal that would alter his life forever.

All he needed was their signature, and he would be headed off to Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, to report for basic training and realize his childhood dream of becoming a U.S. Marine. The year was 1998, and Bermudez was about to graduate from high school a year ahead of his peers.

"They were very reluctant to sign, to say the least," recalled Bermudez. "They basically said, 'No.'"

It was then that Bermudez laid his cards on the table.

"I told them that the day I turned 18, I was just going to do it anyway, and that I might as well get a jump on it," commented Bermudez. "I wasn't bluffing, and I think they sensed the logic behind that argument, so they both agreed to sign."

Two weeks after graduating high school, Bermudez found himself on the "yellow foot-prints" of MCRD San Diego.

"I was a skinny, shy kid, and had no leadership capabilities whatsoever," said Bermudez as he recalled the first few months of his Marine Corps career. "Even after boot camp and SOI (school of infantry), I remember being scared to get to the fleet because of all the stories I'd heard about hazing in the infantry."

Those stories turned out to be unfounded, and Bermudez said he compares them to the urban legends he'd heard growing up in El Paso.

"You know, like the stories about that kid eating those 'Pop Rocks' candies and then drinking a soda and his stomach exploded," said Bermudez. "The stories turned out to be about as true as that. I've never seen such a group of professionals as in the infantry, and seeing the NCOs above me and how hard they worked made me want to be like them someday."

Bermudez first arrived at MCB Hawaii in the winter of 1998 when he received orders to serve as a rifleman with 1/3. Now, seven years later, he finds himself back with the Lava Dogs, this time as a squad leader for 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company.

"I did my whole first enlistment with 1/3," said Bermudez. "They turned me from a boy into a man. Then, after I reenlisted, I received orders



Sgt. Joe Lindsay

Sgt. Florencio Bermudez, squad leader, 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, and a native of El Paso, Texas, points out possible fields of fire and avenues of approach to two rifleman from his squad — Lance Cpl. Bradley Kohorst (standing), from Geneva, Del., and Pfc. Matthew Terry (with rifle) from Katy, Texas — during sustainment training aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay.

to do a tour as the range and management chief here on K-Bay, which I held for the past three years. I always hoped I would one day get the chance to return to the grunts (infantry), though. Now, I'm getting my chance. The Lava Dogs are like my family. I'll be a Lava Dog for life."

If the Lava Dogs are his family, then it could be said that Bermudez is a big brother of sorts to the younger Marines in his company.

"Myself and the younger Marines in Bravo really look up to Sergeant Bermudez," said Pfc. Alden Luchtefeld, a rifleman from Vincennes, Ind. "He's always there for his Marines."

"He's the type of sergeant that we all aspire to

be someday," added Lance Cpl. Joshua Jones, a 1/3 squad automatic weapons gunner from Livingston, Ill.

Pfc. Andre Davis, a 1/3 rifleman from the Manhattan borough of New York City, spoke of Bermudez in a similar vein.

"He's one of the best NCOs I've ever seen," said Davis. "He treats us firm, but fair. You can tell he's been in our shoes before. He doesn't play mind games with us. If it's time to relax for a minute, he lets us relax. If it's time to work, we work hard. When we need to get disciplined, we get disciplined. He gives us respect, and he gets respect back. We all look to him for leadership in Bravo Company, and Sergeant Bermudez delivers. You can really tell he puts his Marines' needs before his own. All of us are going to follow him into battle with no reservations whatsoever."

One Marine who Bermudez said he wished he could lead into battle is his younger brother, Alex, a lance corporal currently serving in Iraq as a radio operator with Regimental Combat Team 2, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward).

"My little brother is on the front lines in Iraq right now, and I'm about to deploy Afghanistan," said Bermudez. "It's a little hard on my folks, 'cause we're both going to be in combat at the same time, but they are proud of us for serving our country. Sometimes I wish we were stationed together, so I could look out for him, but I know he's a tough kid, and he has the best training in the world behind him — just like all Marines."

Lance Cpl. Bermudez joined the Marines in 2003, shortly after his 18th birthday.

"It made me proud that he followed in my footsteps," said the elder Bermudez. "He's turned into an outstanding Marine."

Being an outstanding Marine seems to run in the Bermudez family, as 1st Sgt. Stephen Smith, first sergeant, Bravo Company, 1/3, pointed out that Bermudez is a "go to" Marine.

"As a company first sergeant, it is extremely important that I have Marine NCOs that I can



count on," said Smith, a native of Ontario, Calif.

"Sergeant Bermudez is one of those Marines. The work he does, bringing along our younger Marines, is vital. He works with the Marines extensively and ensures they are taken care of in every way. NCOs are the backbone of the Marine Corps. Sergeant Bermudez exemplifies that."

Bermudez, who's current contract was due to end in July 2006, recently extended so that he could be with Marines from his squad during their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, putting his job plans with the Drug Enforcement Agency on hold.

"Right now I'm in the process of applying to the DEA," said Bermudez, "but I just didn't feel right about getting out just before a combat deployment. If that affects my application, then so be it. I'm a Marine first and foremost."

If indeed Bermudez's application is affected by the deployment, he said he would have no regrets.

"I've been stationed in Hawaii for my entire Marine Corps career," said Bermudez. "I met my wife, Misty, a local girl from Waianae, here. We now have two beautiful daughters, Isela, 3, and Ivette, 1 — both of whom were born at Tripler. Plus, this is the home base of 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, the greatest battalion in the Marine Corps. I love it here, but the pull of home is strong for me, too. After we take care of business in Afghanistan, it's time for me to go back to Texas. It's time to go home."

Despite plans to leave active duty, Bermudez said he was looking at joining the Marine Corps Reserves.

"I know that once you're a Marine, you're always a Marine, but that doesn't mean I'm willing to totally walk away," said Bermudez, who also mentioned that he would apply to be a border patrol agent should the DEA job fall through.

Bermudez is also currently working on a bachelor's degree in criminal justice through Chaminade University in Honolulu and plans to complete his degree at the University of Texas at El Paso.

"No matter what education I get or what career path I end up in, the main thing is — I just want to continue to serve my country," explained Bermudez. "There's just something about being a Marine. It's hard to define, but ask any Marine, and they'll know exactly what I mean."

Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes kill someone every 31 minutes and nonfatally injure someone every two minutes.

— National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

TALON, From A-1

of engulfing the helicopter. The Marines hope to perfect landing in desert environments while at MCAS Yuma.

The Marines will also practice the core skills of helicopter training, which includes landings, aerial gunnery, evacuations and maneuvering in desert climates, which they will integrate the training with Marine Air Group 16, based out of Miramar, Calif.

The two air groups will be in Iraq at the same time. They will train together with 75 different types of aircraft such as CH-53D and CH-53E helicopters, Harriers, Black Hawks, and C-130s.

"I'm looking forward to integrating with MAG-16 in MCAS Yuma," said Lt. Col. Randel W. Parker, squadron commanding officer, HMH-463. "The thing that is unique about Yuma is that it gives us the opportunity to train in an environment similar to

those in Iraq."

There are about 95 Marines and two Sailors who will take part in Desert Talon. About 36 Marines left K-Bay last week for Yuma to prepare all the equipment before training begins, said Sgt. Maj. Karl Villalino, squadron sergeant major, HMH-463.

"The Marines will be in MCAS Yuma for one month preparing for Iraq, said the 37-year-old Long Beach, Calif. native. "The Marines will miss out on Thanksgiving, one sacrifice

that they were willing to give up to better prepare themselves for Operation Iraqi Freedom, but they will be home in time for Christmas."

Parker said the training is essential to make his men combat ready, and he is confident that his Marines can handle whatever they are pit against.

"They will perform outstandingly," said the 43-year-old Denver, Colo. native. "I'm excited about going. The Marines will conquer whatever obstacle that will come in their way."

To read the Hawaii Marine online, visit the Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Web site at www.mcbh.usmc.mil.

K-Bay MP and ‘Duck’ work security



Cpl. Heidi E. Loredo
Military working dog handler, Cpl. Justin L. Beneway, 2nd Military Police Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), home based at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, calms Duck, a patrol explosive detector dog, at an entry control point in Iraq.

Cpl. Heidi E. Loredo
II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — The military policeman to military working dog relationship is a special one, requiring more than just the tiresome shifts the Marines share with their four-pawed friends.

Clinton Corner, N.Y., native, Cpl. Justin L. Beneway, military working dog handler, 2nd Military Police Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), and nine-year-old Duck, a patrol explosive detector dog, share a bond stronger than many handler-dog relationships.

Prior to his enlistment, Beneway desired to become a veterinarian. Aside from his veterinarian studies at Dutchess Community College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., he also held a steady job at an animal hospital.

“I went to college for a couple years, and then I just got restless,” said 23-year-old Beneway. “I always wanted to be in the service, but I wanted to give college a try first while I still had the chance. Impatience got the best of me, and I couldn’t wait any longer. I knew if I never did this I would regret it for the rest of my life.”

Beneway entered the Corps in 2003 and tagged along to boot camp with his brother who is now a TOW gunner with 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. He considers himself lucky to be a dog handler having entered the Corps under an open contract.

“I didn’t know the K-9 field existed,” said Beneway. “I went to (military policeman) school, and I was surprised when they offered it to me.”

Marines selected to be handlers for the K-9s are chosen from the top 2 percent of their class at Military Police School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Once they are selected, they proceed to

Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, for training. Following completion of the course and earning a Top Dog Handler award, Beneway served as a dog handler on assignments at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. Duck is the second dog he has handled.

“I started out with a drug dog in Hawaii, and after about a year with him I kept pushing to get orders to Iraq,” said Beneway. “Then they gave me Duck here, an explosives dog. I picked him up in March and headed to Iraq in May.”

While in Iraq, Beneway utilizes Duck to search for explosives and if need be, seize the enemy. Duck’s duties include trips to entry control points, maneuver and mobility support operations, supply route security and training.

“Recently he found a aircraft missile warhead, 100 pounds of explosives buried alongside of a 155 millimeter mortar round,” said Beneway. “We also go out on patrols with different units to help sweep the roads, clear houses and randomly search vehicles at entry control points.”

Beneway said Duck stands duty with him to present a psychological deterrence against bringing explosives past the gates.

“He also helps keep a safe zone out in town,” said Beneway. “It gets pretty dangerous when people start crowding around me.”

The same canine that can aggressively catch criminals and detect explosives harmlessly rolls around with Beneway after the day is done.

“He likes a lot of attention,” said Beneway. “He knows the difference between work time and play time. However, this is the most aggressive dog we have in Camp Fallujah.”

For Beneway, working with Duck isn’t just a job. It builds a relationship deeper than friendship since they hold each others lives in their

hands ... or paws.

“It’s stronger than any bond I’ve ever had,” said Beneway. “He helps me pay attention to things I didn’t know were going on. If I’m crossing an intersection I’m looking one way, and he instinctively looks the other way. He knows to protect me and watch my back. He’s my best friend.”

Duck is already showing signs of hip problems, a typical ailment with German sheperds. Beneway predicts the dog will be active for at least two more years before he’s retired. In the meantime, Beneway will end his deployment soon and return to his home unit in Hawaii.



Cpl. Heidi E. Loredo
Recently, military working dog, Duck, a patrol explosive detector dog, found an aircraft missile warhead, 100 pounds of explosives buried alongside of a 155 mm mortar round.

Navy chaplains celebrate birthday

Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson

Combat Correspondent

For 230 years, the Navy Chaplain Corps has served America by helping service members and their family members during times of need. They often have provided counseling and someone to confide in when on deployment to combat zones and numerous other places around the world.

Nov. 28, 1775, the Navy Chaplain Corps was established to govern the new Continental Navy for the United States militaries and their service members — a job that they have been doing ever since.

The first chaplain is believed to be Reverend Benjamin Balch, a Harvard graduate, who, on Oct. 30, 1799, was commissioned as the first Navy chaplain under the new Department of the Navy.

In 1841, general regulations mandated ordination and good moral character be the characteristics of Navy chaplains, a regulation that stands today.

“I think the greatest thing is the fact that we’ve been a part of the United States military since its inception,” said Lt. Cmdr. Diane M. Wilson, commanding chaplain, Combat Service Support Group 3, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. “It’s always good to remember those who came before us, members who are putting themselves in harm’s way today and to look forward to where we’re going to be in the future.”

Wilson said the Navy Chaplains Corps is 230 years old and is going strong, and chaplains will always be there to support military members and their families.

“For the anniversary, we do a similar ceremony to what Marines do at their ball,” said Wilson. “We have the oldest and newest member to the Chaplains Corps cut the cake, and then have a guest speaker.”

Navy Chaplains have proved themselves in many ways, some even being awarded the

Medal of Honor.

Lt. Cmdr. Joseph T. O’Callahan, Navy chaplain, was awarded the Medal of Honor for putting his life on the line when he comforted and encouraged injured crewmen during an attack on the USS Franklin by Japanese enemy aircraft during offensive operations near Kobe, Japan, on March 19, 1945.

Navy chaplains do not work alone; enlisted religious program specialists are their assistants and help out in many ways, supporting clergy of all faiths. These Navy RPs set up religious activities and maintain and operate religious facilities on ships and on shore.

“While deployed, we have a lot of different tasks,” said Chief Fermin T. Ancho, religious program coordinator, MCB Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. “My main job is to protect the chaplain, and provide him with transportation. So in a way, I’m like a bodyguard for the chaplain during deployments.”

Ancho said he thinks that the Navy Chaplain Corps was established at a perfect time.

“The military was in desperate need for spiritual relief at that time,” said the Waipahu, Hawaii native. “Military personnel are people and have emotions and the chaplains were there for them to confide in and to see to their spiritual needs. Chaplains were very much needed.”

Ancho said he is unsure of the exact reason why the Navy Chaplain Corps was created, but, in his opinion, he thinks it was because the Marine Corps was created 18 days earlier. Perhaps it was because there was a need for spiritual help more frequently, but it is likely that it was just a coincidence that they were established around the same timeframe.

As the 230th anniversary of the Navy Chaplain Corps rolls around, we’re reminded of the importance of Navy chaplains, said Wilson a Tracy, Calif. native.

“We’re 230 and going strong, and I don’t see anything changing anytime soon.”

DRILL, From A-1

plan. According to assessments, the communication between all squadron departments and higher headquarters was excellent, and all required notifications and reports were completed in an orderly fashion.

Within two and one-half hours of initial notification, HMM-363 had transported the aircraft mishap board, emergency reclamation team and security team to the simulated mishap site. The AMB carried the mishap kit with them to begin initial

mishap investigation; the emergency reclamation team prepared to recover any sensitive equipment; and the security team set up a safety perimeter around the area.

“Once we heard about the situation, we took immediate action in conducting mishap procedures,” said Lt. Col. Paul Fortunato, commanding officer, HMM-363. “We treated it like it was the real thing. We operated safely and properly.”

For three of the past four years, the squadron has been awarded the CNO

Safety Award and prides itself on being ready for no-notice drills and inspections, said Fortunato.

According to Love, HMM-363 was selected to participate in this drill due to their favorable inspection results over the last year as well as its readiness posture. “Based upon the way the ‘Red Lions’ do business, I knew they were well prepared for this type of situation and would serve as a good foundation to further develop

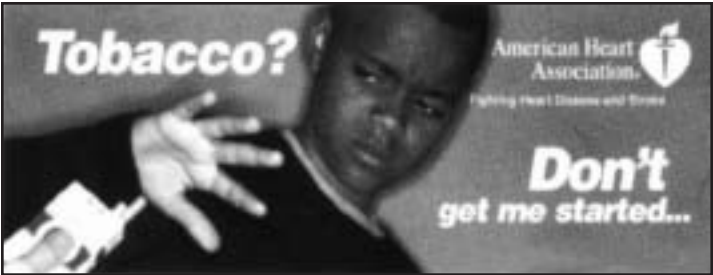
and refine our procedures,” said Col Love.

“Time, initiative and organization can either become your strength or your weakness,” said Love. “HMM-363 was extremely well organized, and that was their key strength. Drawing from the lessons learned, procedures and guidelines will be redefined, and that product will become the model for all the other squadrons to take on board.

One key aspect that the squadron had was teamwork. The squadron pulled together as a team to complete their job as a team, said Fortunato.

“I am extremely proud of my Marines,” he said. “We proved that we could do business the right way without taking any shortcuts. I’m especially proud of how well they conducted themselves in a calm, professional manner.

“We are ready for anything.”



HUMP, From A-1

undergone since returning to Hawaii from California has been vital.

“What we learned in California is only as good as how well we sustain it here,” said the Buffalo, N.Y. native. “That’s why were pushing these Marines so hard. If we let it slip here, then we’ll let it slip there (in Afghanistan); 1/3 doesn’t slip.”

Capt. Eric Thompson, company commander, Weapons Company, 1/3, spoke in a similar vein regarding the battalion’s sustainment training regime, calling it absolutely critical.

“Everyday the Marines are training,” said the San Diego native. “We are not only maintaining our skills, we are improving upon them. From weapons drills, to snipers training at high and low angles, to night driving exercises, 1/3 is focusing on the fundamentals.”

According to Sgt. Michael Chambers, a 1/3 rifleman and Charlie Company platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon, he has yet to see a Marine complain about the heavy sustainment training load that the Lava Dogs are bearing.

“A busy Marine is a happy Marine,” commented the Lexington, S.C. native. “You can’t get enough training. You can’t sit there and get lackadaisical and say, ‘Hey, we’re at the peak right now, we know we’re good enough.’ You just can’t say that, because you’re never good

enough. There’s always room for improvement. We are PTing (physical training) these guys two hours a day, every day. We’re working on the fundamentals of being a grunt. And, of course, we’re humping.”

Chambers, who was recently awarded the Bronze Star with combat “V” for his actions during the battle for Fallujah, said he is proud to be leading his men into combat once again.

“These Marines are ready to go get some,” exclaimed Chambers. “They’re ready to go put their name, and their lives, on the line. I’m proud to be serving with them.”

Another Fallujah veteran, Sgt. Jared Nielson, a 1/3 rifleman and squad leader for Alpha Company, 1st Platoon, 1st Squad, and a native of Spring City, Utah, said he was proud of the way the Marines performed on the hump on Friday.

“Their feet are hurting; their backs are hurting; their shoulders are hurting — everything that can hurt is hurting right now,” noted Nielson, as he methodically cleaned his weapon immediately following the hump. “But every last one of them sucked it up and pushed through the pain. I’m proud of all my Marines. It motivates me to see them working so hard.”

Some Marines commented that they thought the 17-mile hump was easier than the one two weeks ago, even though

the hump on Friday was longer and at a faster pace.

“The reason it felt easier is not because the actual hump was easier, because it wasn’t,” observed Lance Cpl. Jack Sandel, a 1/3 rifleman and team leader with Alpha Company, 1st Platoon, 1st Squad. “The reason it was easier is because the Lava Dogs are getting stronger, both physically and mentally, every single day,” pointed out the Paonia, Colo. native.

Lance Cpl. Jeff Gilbert, from Wilmington, N.C., and Pfc. Dan Breen, from Boston, both 1/3 riflemen with Alpha Company, said they couldn’t agree more.

“Yeah, they’re getting easier, but only because we hump so much,” said Gilbert. “We need to be in shape to climb those mountains in Afghanistan, so everybody knows how serious it is to be ready.”

“That hump was like a blur,” added Breen. “My mind just went blank. I just put one foot in front of the other. That’s all you can do. We’re all used to it by now. We can all take it. We know what’s at stake.”

Perhaps nobody in the battalion knows what’s at stake as well as the man who will be leading the Lava Dogs into battle — 1/3 Commanding Officer Lt. Col. James Bierman

“Sustainment training is important,” said the Virginia Military Institute graduate. “We’re all very focused right now.”

BRONZE, From A-1

Some would say, (and, in fact, the award itself does say), that Scott did a lot more than what he was merely asked to do. For example, Scott (along with Chambers) ran into an open field, under heavy enemy fire, to save two Marines who were pinned down — one of them severely wounded.

“Staff Sergeant Scott grabbed two M-16s — his own and mine — put one in each shoulder, and covered me while I carried the wounded Marine to safety,” said Chambers, recalling that fateful day in Fallujah where he served as Scott’s platoon sergeant. “He took baby steps, slowly backing up, never even flinching when the rounds were impacting all around him. I mean, the impact from the rounds were right on him, dirt and debris was flying all over his body from the near misses, and he just calmly kept firing both weapons at once, making sure that the wounded Marines were protected. We made it, and both those Marines are alive today because of his actions.”

In fact, all 14 of the Marines on that particular mission survived, though 10 received the Purple Heart for their wounds. Chambers was one of them.

Garcia, Scott and Ayala each also received the Purple Heart during Operation Iraq Freedom II.

Garcia and Ayala’s battlefield bravery was similarly striking.

Garcia’s citation, in part, reads, “With complete disregard for his own safety, he exposed himself to enemy rocket-propelled grenade and machine-gun fire as he directed his unit’s fire against insurgent forces. Despite receiving a shrapnel wound to his eye, he remained on the battlefield, refused evacuation and continued to lead the company in prosecuting the destruction of enemy forces.”

Like Garcia, Ayala was also wounded, and, according to the citation, displayed extreme valor under enemy fire, “Ignoring shrapnel wounds to his hands and face and with complete disregard for his own safety, he ran through the enemy machine-gun fire and pulled the first Marine out of the impact zone. He again plunged head-on into the hail of bullets and assisted in carrying the second wounded Marine out of the line of fire.”

“This award, this ceremony, all of this — it’s not for me,” said Ayala immediately following the presentation. “This is for all my brothers who passed away in Iraq. This is for the men not here who don’t get a chance to grow old. They died so young. They gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country, for their families. The Marines in Fallujah will never be forgotten,” said Ayala, who is currently serving as a squad leader in 1/3’s Distributed Operations Platoon.

When told of the Marines’ words, Bierman said he wasn’t surprised.

“They are heroes, and they carry themselves in the humble, self-effacing way heroes do,” said the Virginia native. “They are not the type of men who thump their chests. They have made an incredible impression on me, the officers and Staff NCOs of 1/3, and particularly the younger

Garcia’s wife, Lisa, a native of Sacramento, Calif. “More than anything, I’m just proud to be a part of his life.”

For his part, Maj. Michael Miller, 1/3 executive officer, said it was a privilege to serve with Garcia, Scott, Chambers and Ayala.

“Hero is a term that everybody uses, almost as a panacea, when referring to anybody that’s serving in Iraq or Afghanistan,” said the Boalsburg, Pa., native. “When a Bronze Star is awarded with the combat distinguishing device, it sets them apart for actual heroic achievement. These four Marines are heroes in every sense of the word.”